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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

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ON THE

Destruction of Churches,

IN THE

DIOCESE OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

DURING THE LATE WAR.

PRESENTED TO THE

Protestant Episcopal Convention,

MAY, 1868.

CHARLESTON.
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Report of Committee

TO COLLECT INFORMATION CONCERNING

DESTRUCTION OF CHURCHES AND CHURCH PROPERTY

IN THE DIOCESE OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

The Committee to whom was referred the duty of gathering information with regard to the destruction of Churches and loss of Church Property during the war, beg leave to Report :

That they have discharged the trust committed to them as accurately as they could. It has required much patience and perseverance to obtain definite information as to the condition of many of the Churches which lay in the track of the invader.

That fierce tornado which swept over our State from its southwestern to its north-eastern borders, leaving the ashes of cities, and villages, and Churches, and homesteads to mark its desolating track, so uprooted the foundations of our social and domestic life, as sometimes to leave few survivors to tell the tale. The destruction of railroads, the absence of postoffices, the loss of Church Records, and the removal of those members of the congregation who were familiar with their parochial history, have often rendered it exceedingly difficult to obtain information authentic enough to embody in this report.

But the Committee believe that they have at last succeeded in their efforts to present a true and accurate statement.

They begin with the Churches in the southwestern portion of the diocese, and will trace their history geographically in the order of Sherman's march.

ST. PETER'S CHURCH, ROBERTVILLE.—Was the only Episcopal Church in that parish. It was a new Church, built in 1859, of wood. It was burnt by the Federal army in January, 1865, together with the residences of every member of the congregation.

The small congregation has been entirely dispersed. There is neither building, nor minister, nor people. The Church may be considered dead.

ST. LUKE'S PARISH.—The Church of the Holy Trinity, Grahamville, escaped with the destruction of its organ and furniture, and some injury to chancel and pews. Its parsonage was burnt with the greater portion of the town. Only five dwelling houses escaped the torch. A portion of the congregation have returned, but almost every member is in a state of bankruptcy. The systematic destruction of houses, barns, buildings, and fences around the rich man's estate, and the poor man's cabin, forbid any prospect of speedy restoration to this portion of the country.

The recent death of their long-esteemed Pastor has added to their calamities. By the action of our Diocesan Missionary Society, the remnant of this Church is supplied with missionary services monthly.

THE CHURCH AT BLUFFTON has a similar history to its sister Church in this parish. It was not involved in the destruction of the town, being protected from the flames by its beautiful grove of oaks. But the dispersion of the population, with the poverty of the few remaining families, has caused a suspension of religious services. The Rector, the Rev. James Stoney, after trying in vain to revive the parish, has been compelled to leave the diocese for want of support. The Church is, therefore, suspended.

THE CHURCH ON HILTON HEAD, a chapel of ease to St. Luke's Parish, has entirely disappeared. It was a wooden structure, not of much value. The materials, it is believed, were removed by the negroes in order to build houses for themselves on that island.

This appears to have been the fate with many of the chapels built by the planters all around Beaufort, for the religious benefit of their people. Chapels and materials have both disappeared, probably with the same destination.

ST. HELENA CHURCH, BEAUFORT.—Established in 1712, one of the oldest Churches in the State, has had a varied experience of the changes through which we have passed. Upon the capture of Port Royal in November, 1861, the entire population of

Beaufort fled from their homes, including every family connected with the Church. The Federal forces converted the building into a hospital, removed the pews and galleries, and floored it across so as to form a second story.

Dr. Walker, for forty years the venerated Rector of the Church, has returned to his home, and officiated in the lecture room to a small remnant of his former flock. The confiscation of the property of St. Helena Parish, by acts of Congress, has reduced this congregation to more than ordinary destitution. They can neither repair their Church nor support their Rector. The Domestic Board of Missions has placed Dr. Walker upon their lists of missionaries, and thus enabled him to resume his ministry; and the aid of friends has partially restored the Church, so that it can now be used for worship. The Rector and remnant of this parish must needs recall the years when St. Helena Church, in proportion to numbers, stood *first* among the donors to the cause of missions in the United States. It has contributed more than wealth to God's house. The late beloved bishop of Georgia, STEPHEN ELLIOTT, went out from this devoted altar, to consecrate his lofty intellect and capacious heart to Christ. And ten or twelve other ministers of our Church claim this Church as their spiritual home.

THE CHURCH ON ST. HELENA ISLAND, also one of the old Churches of the diocese, was completely stripped of pews and furniture, and is now in the hands of the Methodists. It is used by the freedmen, who constitute the sole population of the island, as a place for their meetings. It may be considered dead.

SHELDON CHURCH, PRINCE WILLIAMS' PARISH.—It has been the fate of this venerable Church to pass through two revolutions, and to experience the same fortune in each. It was burnt "by the British in 1780, on their march from Savannah to Charleston;"* and it was burnt again by the United States army on their march from Savannah to Charleston in 1865. It had previously been stripped of pews and furniture by the negroes. All that was combustible was consumed, except the roof, which was above the reach of fire; and its massive walls survive the last as they did the former conflagration.

From 1780 to 1830 it remained desolate. The writer can remember how an oak tree which grew in the centre of the ven-

* Dalcho.

erable pile filled the interior, and threw its ample branches over the lofty walls, while a cedar sprang from the chancel recess, and hyssop and ivy coated the ruin with green. It was rebuilt about 1830, and has been a living parish up to the early part of the war. Its services were suspended by the death of its valued Rector, Rev. Edward Reed. May it rise once more from its ruins to become a temple of the living God.

THE MISSION CHAPEL, in the same parish, built by Rev. S. Elliott for the negroes on the Combahee, was taken down by Sherman's troops in order to build a bridge over that river. The materials were visible last year in the bridge.

It was Mr. Elliott's design to revive his Church among the colored population, to whom he had been preaching the gospel for thirty years. Our Diocesan Board of Missions had encouraged him to resume his work among the members of his former charge; but his unexpected death deprived the diocese of the labors of one of the most experienced African missionaries known to our Church. He had built this Chapel, and given his gratuitous services for many years for the benefit of the African race. For this work he had a peculiar adaptation; but his work has ceased, his congregation is scattered, and his Church destroyed. What fruit he will find garnered up in another world, we know not. But when "Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God," some of her sable sons, we doubt not, will be given him for his hire.

ASCENSION CHURCH, Combahee, which Mr. Elliott served in connection with his chapel, is in good repair, but not used for religious service. Very few of the congregation remain, and those who are attempting to plant in that vicinity, are not attached to the Episcopal Church.

THE ASHEPOO CHURCH, St. Bartholomew's Parish, partially survives—the frame is standing, but its weather-boarding and flooring are entirely gone. Foster's troops used them to build a bridge over the river. Every planter's house has been burnt for miles around, and the population generally dispersed. A few men are trying to plant the rice lands, but no families have returned, nor have they the means of rebuilding Church or homes.

CHRIST CHURCH, WILTON.—This beautiful building is standing, embowered as of old in its venerable oaks, but its doors are closed, and its congregation scattered. The pews were in part removed by the Confederates, and the building used as a commissary depot. The pleasant homes of the planters on the Edisto River were generally burnt in the march of the Federal troops. No white family lives near the Church; freedmen occupy the country, and inhabit the only surviving mansion. A remnant of this congregation have settled ten miles below, where educated, and once wealthy men, may be seen ploughing their lands, and grinding their corn, while their wives and daughters cook and wash. A missionary service once a month constitutes the extent of their religious privileges.

CHURCH FLATS.—This was a new building erected by the planters on the Stono, for the use of that portion of St. Paul's Parish extending along the banks of the river. It was burnt by the Federal army on the 22d February, 1865, accidentally rather than intentionally. The troops set fire to a neighboring house; the fire extended to the Church and destroyed it. The Rector, Rev. Joseph Seabrook, and family, were at the same time driven from their home to seek shelter in Charleston. The Church may be considered extinct.

ST. PAUL'S, STONO, was repaired thoroughly in 1863; was converted into a commissary store by Confederate troops in 1864, being not then used for divine service; the pews and Church furniture torn out and destroyed; its funds, of some three thousand dollars, were invested in Confederate scrip, and are valueless. Its plate is in possession of the Vestry of St. Paul's, Summerville.

THE CHURCH ON JOHN'S ISLAND was entirely destroyed by a disastrous fire which swept over the Island in the spring of 1864, consuming many other buildings in its course. The fire is believed to have been accidental. It is not known whether it originated in some of the Federal camps, or in the carelessness of negroes.

This Church had also a considerable fund, about \$30,000, invested in stocks and bonds. The stocks are worthless, and it is estimated by its treasurer that \$3,000 only can be realized from its bonds. Few of the former residents have returned to their

homes, and there is no present prospect of reorganizing the congregation. The pecuniary losses of this parish, including Church, parsonage and funds, exceed those of any other congregation in the diocese but one.

THE CHURCH AT LEGAREVILLE, a summer resort of the planters on this Island, was also burnt during the war. The village was deserted when the Island was abandoned by the Confederate forces. On the return of peace the Church had disappeared. The mode of its destruction is not known. It adds another item to the losses of the Parish.

ST. ANDREW'S PARISH.—This venerable Church, built in 1706, survives—but in the midst of a desert. Every residence but one, on the west bank of Ashley River, was burnt simultaneously with the evacuation of Charleston, by the besieging forces from James Island. Many of these were historical homes in South Carolina; the abodes of refinement and hospitality for more than a century past. The residence of the Rector was embowered in one of the most beautiful gardens which nature and art can create—more than two hundred varieties of camelia, combined with stately avenues of magnolia, to delight the eye even of European visitors. But not a vestige remains, save the ruins of his ancestral home.

The demon of civil war was let loose in this Parish. But three residences exist in the whole space between the Ashley and Stono rivers. Fire and sword were not enough. Family vaults were riddled, and the coffins of the dead forced open in pursuit of plunder.

It must be many years before the congregation can return in sufficient numbers to rebuild their homes and restore the worship of God.*

JAMES ISLAND.—The Church on James Island was accidentally destroyed during the siege of Charleston. It was between the Confederate lines. Some of our troops, amusing themselves in rabbit hunting, set fire to the grass in an old field. The fire

* NOTE.—A delegate to this Convention informs us that he attended the recent election at this Church, and found three freedmen holding the poll in the chancel, while a door of the Church, laid across the chancel rail, formed the table for the reception of votes. This needless desecration, it is hoped, will not be continued.

communicated with the Church and destroyed it. It was a wooden building, and not a costly one, but quite sufficient for the wants of the congregation. The Parish has neither Church, congregation, nor Rector.

The Churches in Charleston have suffered their share of the calamities of war, in proportion to their proximity to the enemy's batteries on Morris Island.

St. MICHAEL'S Church, the most Southern Episcopal Church in the city, was exposed to peculiar danger. For a year and a half its beautiful spire was a target for their artillery. The public buildings around were torn by shells aimed at it. The grave yard was ploughed, and its monuments scarred by the balls so remorselessly rained upon it. But the lofty spire still lifts up its head, a beacon to the homeward bound mariner. Several shells penetrated the Church, destroying portions of the interior. The roof, pews and floor suffered from the dangerous missiles. One struck the centre of the chancel wall and burst just within, tearing in pieces the carved panels of English oak, with its exquisite paintings, and massive rails. Its fine organ, the gift of our English ancestors more than a century since, was removed to a place of safety, and has been restored to the Church. But its chime of bells, one of the best in the country, was not so fortunate. They were sent to Columbia, and placed under a shed in the State House yard. The Federal soldiers set fire to the shed, and the heat cracked and destroyed the bells. They were shipped to England, and recast by the same firm by whom they were manufactured a hundred years since. They have recently been restored to their place, and now invite our people to the house of God with their familiar sound, and break the otherwise painful silence of the Sabbath morn. These bells have known the vicissitudes of war. In the Revolution they were taken away and exposed for sale in England. They were purchased by a Mr. Ryhinen, an English gentleman, and generously restored to the Church. After calling our population to public worship for one hundred years, and giving utterance to the public joy or the public grief through that eventful period, they perished in the second and more calamitous Revolution through which our country has just passed. Their restoration to the old spire was hailed with joy by our citizens, and the pre-

servation of that graceful spire, as well as the venerable church itself, now the historic church of the diocese, is a subject of devout gratitude to our city and our State.

ST. PHILIP'S CHURCH suffered more than St. Michael's, or any other in the city. The marks of twelve shells were visible, which had penetrated the roof and walls. The costly organ was irreparably damaged. Its lofty spire escaped injury. It has been repaired, and is now regularly open for divine service. The injury to the church and organ will cost the congregation eight thousand dollars.

The financial condition of our diocese is illustrated by a fact in the history of these two churches, the largest and wealthiest in the State. St. Philip's could not raise the amount necessary to make their church habitable, until the sum was advanced by an individual whose means had escaped the ravages of war.

Nor could St. Michael's pay the customhouse dues upon their bells, without the aid of public subscriptions, and voluntary concerts.

GRACE CHURCH was struck by a single shell, but that proved a destructive one. It crushed one of the central columns and cracked the superincumbent walls up to the roof, tore away twelve pews, and cut the interior in many places. The injury was temporarily repaired by a wooden pillar.

Soon after the evacuation of the city, this church was re-opened for service, and for a year it afforded to the Episcopalians of Charleston a place of worship while our other sanctuaries lay desolate.

ST. LUKE AND ST. STEPHEN'S also received damage from shells in roof and walls. But they have been repaired, and restored to their holy uses.

ST. PETER'S, CHARLESTON.—This church was destroyed during the war, though not directly by it. It perished in the great conflagration which swept over our city in December, 1861. It was founded in 1830, and formed the scene of the zealous ministry of Rev. W. H. Barnwell. In zeal and good works this church was, for thirty years, a burning and shining light to our diocese, and its influence lives though its light has perished.

The congregation has been divided among other churches, and there seems to be little prospect of its revival in the diminished population of our city. It was insured for \$20,000 in Georgia; but the failure of the companies in which they have vested their funds, render the policy useless.

St. Michael's, St. Paul's, St. Peter's and Grace Church, lost their communion plate in whole or in part. It was sent to Columbia during the siege of Charleston, and was either stolen or destroyed in the burning of that city. One piece of ante-revolutionary date, was purchased in New York and restored to St. Michael's. Their Parish Records generally shared the same fate.

GRACE CHURCH, SULLIVAN'S ISLAND.—This was a brick building, originally erected for a lazaretto. It was purchased in 1816, and formed into a Parish Church for the Episcopalians who made the island their home during the summer. When the houses on the island were removed to give place to those formidable batteries which, for four years, protected the harbor from hostile fleets, the Church was exposed to the chances of war. When the United States forces established their batteries on Morris Island, the Church then came in reach of their shells, which riddled roof and floor, and consumed the wood work.

Its roofless walls still lift up their solemn sides in the silence of the scene. Houses and population have both disappeared. The green earth-works with their frowning guns, cover the site of the once populous village—but you may walk along their entire length without meeting soldier or citizen, or hearing any sound save the ceaseless roll of the sea.

There is a strange and painful solitude reigning around those shores, where once our citizens flocked to stroll along the crowded beach; and a more solemn silence reigning over those massive works, whose thunders shook our city by day and night. Is this desolation the sure wages of war?

The few families who inhabit the Island are chiefly Irish Romanists. No members of our Church remain, nor is there any prospect of its revival.

CHRIST CHURCH PARISH.—The old Church, six miles from Charleston, lay just within the lines on the east of the city, and

was occupied by the Confederate troops. It received some damage from them. But after the evacuation of the city, its ruin was completed by the Federal soldiers; pews, pulpit, floors, doors and windows were destroyed, and the brick walls cut through in many places.

History has reproduced itself in this old Church. It was desecrated by the British in the Revolution, and their cavalry stabled within it. The Federal troops put it to the same use when stationed in the vicinity. It still lies desolate, its open doors affording shelter to the stray cattle and to the birds of the air. Its fund of \$6000 is nearly worthless.

ST. JOHN'S BERKELEY.—Previous to the war no Parish in the Diocese was better prepared to take care of its clergyman. It owned a rice plantation which rented for twelve hundred, sometimes for fifteen hundred dollars per annum, and about ten thousand dollars in stocks. It owned a winter parsonage and a summer residence for its minister, in a healthy position. But almost all this has gone. Biggin Church was much injured and its walls defaced; all the pews, the desk and chancel rails were torn down and burnt. The congregation is not revived, except by a monthly service.

The Churches on the seaboard north of Charleston fared better than those which bore the brunt of the invasion.

THE TWO CHURCHES ON NORTH AND SOUTH SANTEE escaped, though they were stripped of furniture, organ and all movables. The Church plate was stolen, but the set belonging to St. James' was recovered by application to a Federal officer commanding a gunboat on the river. The Bible and prayer book (the gift of Rebecca Motte, of revolutionary fame,) were saved. The Bible was stolen by British soldiers, at the close of the Revolution, and carried to London for sale. It was exposed in a bookseller's stall, where the owner's name attracted the notice of WILLIAM BULL, former Lieutenant Governor of the Province of South Carolina, by whom it was purchased and restored to the Church. No service has been resumed in either Parish, nor do their means afford any present prospect of supporting a clergyman.

THE FIVE CHURCHES AT GEORGETOWN AND WACCAMAW suffered less, only two of them losing their carpets and furniture. But

the prostration of the once flourishing Churches on Waccamaw is complete. They contained more wealth than any other rural Parish in South Carolina, or perhaps in the South. There were the homes of the largest rice planters on this continent. Their provision for the temporal and spiritual welfare of their slaves was a standard to other planters. Numerous chapels, built by the proprietors for the use of their people, adorned the estates, where the services of our Church were as well performed as in any other congregation in the land. The faithful labors of their revered Pastor, Rev. A. Glennie, for thirty years, had wrought blessed results, aided by the systematic teachings of the planters and their families. Hundreds of the colored race were communicants of our Church—thousands of colored children recited the catechism, and answered as intelligently as any of their age in Europe or America; and the Lord's work seemed prospering and sure. Alas, for the change in five or six years! Poverty has overtaken these desolated homes; the rice fields, rich as any land between the Mississippi and the Nile, lie desolate; their former laborers can scarcely be induced to work.

Their religious deterioration is painful. They have forsaken the way which they had learned, and taken to themselves teachers of their own color. Fanaticism and extravagance rule in their religious assemblies to such an extent as to require the aid of the military to keep order and repress violence. There are indications of a return to African barbarism. There is no religious services re-established in the three Churches on Waccamaw. The planters are bankrupt; their houses despoiled; their costly libraries torn to pieces or shipped to Northern ports. What good the Lord may work out of the present confusion we know not; but to human eyes the present state of things is only evil to both races which inhabit these beautiful shores.*

The other Churches between the seaboard and Columbia, at Barnwell, Pineville, Sumter, Richland and Orangeburg escaped destruction, but received more or less damage.

CHRIST CHURCH, COLUMBIA, shared the fate of that beautiful city when burnt by General Sherman's army in February, 1865.

*NOTE.—Arrangements have just been made with the Rector of Prince Frederick's Parish, to hold a monthly service in one of the Churches on Waccamaw.

With the exception of its elder sister in that city, it was the largest and handsomest Church in the diocese, outside of Charleston. It was consecrated in 1859, and was in the height of its prosperity. The Church with its organ, carpets, books and all that it contained, was destroyed in that fearful night. The loss to the congregation amounted to \$30,000. A disputed title to the lot on which the original Church stood has involved them in additional losses, and the removal of many of their members in the depopulation of Columbia has reduced to the lowest ebb this once flourishing congregation. The few survivors find themselves quite unable to support a minister. Their services are maintained by the aid of the Domestic Board of Missions. The destruction of this Church may be considered the heaviest blow to the welfare of our diocese.

TRINITY CHURCH, COLUMBIA, suffered the loss of its picturesque parsonage, which was burnt, as well as the Sunday School house, with their contents, including the records of the Parish from its organization. The loss to the Church amounts to \$9,000 or \$10,000.

The communion plate, a valuable set, was forcibly taken from the Rector, by a band of soldiers, as he was endeavoring to carry it from his burning house to a place of safety. It has never been recovered.

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, WINNSBORO'.—This Church was wantonly burnt by Sherman's troops, on their march through Winnsboro'. The public square was destroyed, but the Church was not touched by that fire. It was on the outskirts of the town in a large lot, and was deliberately set on fire by the soldiers, after the central square was consumed. The organ, furniture, books, and all the Church property perished. It has involved a small congregation in a loss of \$5000. Their services are maintained, and there is some prospect of rebuilding the Church—the *only instance* in the diocese of any such proposal. Its bell has an interesting history. It was the survivor of the chime once belonging to the old Church at Dorchester. When that Church was deserted, the bells were loaned to St. Paul's, Charleston. This one at length found its way to Winnsboro', and perished with so many records of the past in our disastrous conflict.

GRACE CHURCH, CAMDEN.—The Church escaped (but has, unfortunately, been burnt in the last year); the Bishop's residence was respected; but the brick building owned by the Church, and loaned to the Theological Seminary, was burnt by incendiaries after the troops passed through. The greater part of the library belonging to the Society for the advancement of Christianity in South Carolina was thus destroyed. The loss to the seminary and the diocese is heavy, for this library was the accumulation of fifty years, and contained many rare and costly books, whose money value it is impossible to estimate.

ST. DAVID'S CHURCH, CHERAW.—Was the last Church in the eastern part of the State in the line of the Federal invasion. It was seriously damaged by an explosion of ammunition near it, and doors, windows, and part of the wall shattered. The Church plate was stolen, with books and furniture, and its enclosure torn down. But the Church is habitable, and its worship continues.

To sum up the losses of the diocese it appears:

That ten Churches have been burnt;

That three have disappeared;

That twenty-two Parishes are suspended;

That eleven parsonages have been burnt; that every Church between the Savannah River and Charleston has been injured, some stripped even of weather-boarding and flooring; that almost every minister in that region of the State has lost home and library; that along the entire seaboard, from North Carolina to Georgia, where our Church had flourished for more than a century, there are but four Parishes which maintain religious services; that not one, outside the city of Charleston, can be called a living, self-sustaining Parish; that their Clergy live by fishing, farming, and mechanic arts; and that almost every Church, whose history appears on this record, has lost its communion plate, often a massive and venerable set, the donation of an English or Colonial ancestor.

Our Diocesan funds have shared the fate of all Southern investments.

The Society for relief of the widows and orphans of the Clergy has lost \$100,000.

The Society for advancement of Christianity in South Carolina has lost \$56,000.



The Bishop's fund, \$18,000.

The three Scholarships in the general Seminary (maintained by this Diocese.) \$10,000; making the total loss of vested Diocesan funds \$184,000.

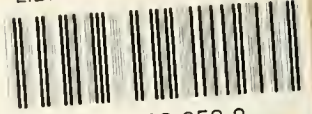
Many of the older Churches also owned Bonds and Stocks, which have been sadly reduced or rendered worthless. From partial returns these losses amount to \$98,000.

The pecuniary losses might be repaired if the diocese was as in days gone by. But in its present impoverished condition, no hope remains of speedy restoration. This generation can scarcely behold it.

May the God of all grace grant us, in faith and patience, to try and build again the waste places of Zion. "O Lord of Hosts, look down from Heaven, behold and visit this vine, which thy right hand hath planted." "It hath been burnt with fire, and the wild boar out of the wood doth root it up." "Comfort us again after the time that thou has plagued us and for the years wherein we have suffered adversity." "Show thy servants thy work, and their children thy glory." Prosper thou the work of our hands, "O, prosper thou our handy work!"

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